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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MX](#)

SUBJECT: CALDERON'S CAMPAIGN TAKES SHAPE

REF: A. MEXICO 7074

[B](#). MEXICO 7251

[C](#). MEXICO 6976

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Leslie A. Bassett Reasons:
1.4 (B/D)

[1](#). (U) Summary: Coming off his victory in the PAN primary, Felipe Calderon has been enjoying good times. He officially became the PAN's candidate in a ceremony conducted December [4](#). Recent polls show his numbers rising as those the PRD's Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) and the PRI's Roberto Madrazo's are falling. Calderon, who until recently enjoyed little name recognition outside the PAN, has also been showing to advantage in public appearances. The PAN leadership has meanwhile continued to refine its campaign machinery, establishing a nine-member "classified" committee to handle all campaign related issues, including promoting Calderon's message. Reported tensions exist between Team Calderon and the PAN party structure, with some claiming party President Manuel Espino fumbled coalition negotiations with the "Green" (PVEM) party. But increasingly pundits and pollsters are bullish on Calderon. End summary.

Upward Swing in the Polls

[2](#). (U) Although polls released over the last several weeks vary, one trend remains the same: Calderon's numbers are on the rise while AMLO and Madrazo's numbers are falling. A recent poll in the daily El Universal showed AMLO with 40 percent of the vote, Calderon with 31 percent and Madrazo 21 percent. Shortly before that, the daily Reforma published a poll in which AMLO was given 29 percent, Calderon 28 percent, and Madrazo 21 percent. AMLO strongly objected to this poll, accusing Reforma of doctoring their numbers in order to give Calderon's campaign a boost. Calderon responded by challenging AMLO to define the methodology or polling company that the public should find credible, and by accusing AMLO of discounting any poll that showed his decline.

[3](#). (U) Calderon has also made the most of several recent public appearances such as his interview on Televisa's "Dialogues for Mexico" and his speeches at the Mexican stock exchange (ref a) and American Chamber of Commerce (ref b). During these appearances, he presented his platform clearly and succinctly, demonstrated a command of economic and social issues, and appeared at ease while giving specific answers to the questions asked. Calderon continues to work the business circuit assiduously, speaking before the pharmaceutical industry the first week in December.

Calderon's Message

[4](#). (U) Calderon's message is three-pronged. First, Calderon emphasizes that a vote for the PRD or the PRI is a step backwards to the old ways of corrupt politics. Next, he praises the Fox administration's accomplishments, highlighting that Mexico is better off today than it was in 2000, but indicates that there is more to be done. (Note: Many thought Calderon would distance himself from the Fox administration in which he served briefly as Energy Secretary, but instead he consistently praises the administration for improving healthcare and combating poverty and recently invited the press to a breakfast he had with

Fox. Calderon perhaps has an eye on recent polls that show Mexicans continue to have a remarkably positive view of Fox the man, whatever they may think about the effectiveness of his administration. End note.) And finally, Calderon promises that the PAN will work towards a more competitive and prosperous Mexico.

Classified Committee

15. (C) While the PAN publicly continues to refer to its political committee as a decision-making body for the campaign, PAN officials tell us otherwise. The PAN leadership recently established a "classified" committee to handle all campaign-related issues. Despite Fox's recent public injunctions to his administration to stay out of the race, the committee consists of three members of the current Fox administration, three members of Calderon's campaign team, and three party representatives. The nine members are: Secretary of Social Development Josefina Vasquez Mota, head of the President's Public Policy Office Eduardo Sojo, head of the President's Office for Government Innovation Ramon Munoz, Calderon Campaign Coordinator Juan Camilo Mourino, PAN National Council and National Executive Committee member Gerardo Ruiz Mateos, PAN Deputy Juan Molinar, PAN Secretary of Elections Arturo Garcia Portillo, PAN Sonora Senator Hector Larios, and Baja California Governor Eugenio Elorduy. The secretive nature of the committee may stem from President Fox's reluctance to have more cabinet resignations in his term. It may also reflect uneasiness within the Calderon camp about PAN leadership. Press reports, for example, suggest the Calderon camp believes PAN President Espino bungled coalition negotiations with the PVEM, which ended up aligning with the PRI after Espino said publicly the PVEM wasn't worth its asking price.

Comment

16. (C) Calderon, the unexpected PAN candidate, is clearly getting a bounce in the polls from his successful primary election, his impressive early appearances as the official candidate, and a high-profile formal campaign launch last weekend. Pollsters suggest his higher favorables primarily reflect hard-line PAN voters who couldn't get behind failed candidate Santiago Creel. His challenge remains to energize the PAN political structure, sway currently uncommitted voters to turn out to vote for him, and position himself favorably against his two competitors. There's still a long way to go.

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